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NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/MARCHESE/HARDING

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SUBJECT: LEBANON: PM SINIORA CONVOKES UNSC MEMBER STATE
MISSIONS ON TRIBUNAL

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador. Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION: PM Siniora summoned the chiefs of missions of all UNSC member embassies in Beirut at 6:00 PM on May 16 to make a pitch for UNSC adoption of a Chapter VII resolution on the Special Tribunal. Present were the ambassadors of Italy, Russia, China, and Belgium; Charges or DCM,s attended for the U.S., UK, France, Qatar, and Indonesia. Siniora gave a spirited account of how the majority-led government in Beirut has been blocked by unreasonable opposition tactics that have impeded the establishment of the tribunal. Modestly challenging questions came from the Russian Ambassador. The Italian Ambassador noted privately his government's special concerns, related to the large Italian presence in the expanded UNIFIL mission of southern Lebanon. End summary and introduction.

¶2. (C) Siniora spoke for over an hour, recounting the history of the Tribunal since consideration of its establishment began in 2005. He focused especially on the government,s efforts to engage the opposition openly and fairly, GOL interaction with the UN system including the latest mission of UN Legal Advisor Nicolas Michel, and the refusal of the opposition to reveal its objections to the Tribunal even though the National Dialogue process of a year ago had brought unanimous consent for the Tribunal. Siniora made a comprehensive, logical, and forceful case for the government, though he never concluded with the politician,s standard final pitch: "I am asking for your vote."

¶3. (C) Questions were brief and limited. The Belgian ambassador asked how the Lebanese judges would be chosen if the UNSCR adopts a tribunal resolution under Chapter VII. Siniora replied that he would be sending a delegation to New York to be available for consultations with the Security Council and its members. They will be able to address this question as well as any others. The Belgian ambassador then asked about financing for the Tribunal, given that the agreed GOL-UN statute requires 49 percent funding from Lebanon, and the Lebanese Parliament, now out of session, must appropriate that money. Siniora replied that funds have not been approved by Parliament, so other options will have to be explored.

¶4. (C) The Russian ambassador asked how the Lebanese opposition would react if the UNSC adopts the resolution under Chapter VII. Could they reject it? Siniora commented that for now, the remarks of opposition politicians imply that they consider the Tribunal a fait accompli. They may later consider the Tribunal to be illegitimate, and some

forces might resort to bombings or assassinations. "But that would be extreme," Siniora added. The Russian ambassador then said such a resolution would be a qualitatively new situation, in that part of Lebanon would recognize the resolution, but another part of Lebanon would not. "How does the UNSC deal with this difficulty?" he asked. Siniora replied that the question assumes that the victim is being blamed. The Russian ambassador's question should be asked of the opposition, he asserted.

15. (C) While UNSC embassy reps were waiting to enter the session with Siniora, the Qatari Charge told DCM that he had met with Siniora earlier in the day (suggesting that Siniora had convoked him on the tribunal resolution). During the meeting, Italian Ambassador Checchia took a call from his minister, who wanted a status update on the Tribunal. Checchia confided to DCM that the Italian MFA is divided on the issue of support for Chapter VII action. The Italians want early engagement with the P-3 on the drafting of the resolution text, in light of their substantial UNIFIL contribution and thus high exposure to possible violence in Lebanon. Ambassador Checchia followed up with a call on the Ambassador on the morning of May 17. He repeated the Italian concerns that Chapter VII adoption of the Special Tribunal resolution could have implications for internal violence in Lebanon, including against UNIFIL. He repeated the request for early P-3 engagement on the resolution, noting that he was speaking on instructions, and that he believed the Italian PermRep in New York had received the same instruction.

FELTMAN